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Wednesday, June 18, 2025

Will Harvard Continue to Lead the Charge? - Part 20



From the [NY Times](#): Secretary of State Marco Rubio is pushing to investigate whether Harvard University violated federal sanctions by collaborating on a health insurance conference in China that may have included officials blacklisted by the U.S. government, according to people familiar with the matter and documents reviewed by The New York Times... **Whether the agency within the Treasury that handles sanctions, the Office of Foreign Assets Control, opened an investigation in response was unclear — but such a move could expose Harvard to significant legal risks...**

Mr. Rubio's action is the latest example of the Trump administration's whole-of-government approach to bringing the Ivy League university to heel. President Trump has sought for months to impose his political agenda on Harvard by reshaping its curriculum, admissions and hiring processes. **The effort initially relied primarily on accusations that university officials had not done enough to address antisemitism on campus. In recent weeks, however, the administration's focus has expanded to other issues, including allegations about Harvard's foreign ties, particularly to China.**

...The health insurance conference, known as the Training Course on Health Financing, began in 2019 as a joint venture between Harvard, the World Bank and the National Health Insurance Administration, the arm of the Chinese government that oversees the state-backed health care system, according to the university's website. Over the years, training has focused on topics like "innovative provider payment methods" and "pricing and payment for internet health." ...

Behind Mr. Rubio's sanctions push is the presence of officials from a Chinese state-run group called the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps at some, if not all, of the conferences since 2019. The X.P.C.C. is known in northwest China for building towns and running its own university and hospital systems. The group is also responsible for systemic human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in the region, according to the U.S. government...

Full story at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/11/us/politics/rubio-harvard-sanctions-investigation.html>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:

Labels: [Harvard](#), [politics](#)

Straws in the Wind - Part 13

From [Inside Higher Ed](#): Texas public college and university presidents will be able to take control of their faculty governing bodies if Gov. Greg Abbott signs a bill now before him. "Shared governance structures may not be used to obstruct, delay, or undermine necessary institutional reforms or serve as a mechanism for advancing ideological or political agendas," says Senate Bill 37, which the Republican-dominated State Legislature passed May 31. Multiple states have considered GOP bills targeting shared governance, but SB 37 is a sweeping example. It says that "only the governing board of an institution of higher education may establish a faculty council or senate."



If a college or university board decides to keep a faculty governing body, the institution's president gets to prescribe how it conducts meetings. The president also gets to pick the "presiding officer, associate presiding officer, and secretary." In addition, unless the college or university's board decides otherwise, faculty senates and councils must shrink to no more than 60 members. Those remaining 60 would have to include at least two representatives from each of the colleges and schools that comprise the institution—including what the bill describes vaguely as "one member appointed by the president or chief executive officer of the institution" and the rest elected by the faculty of the particular school or college. This could mean that half of a faculty senate or council would be chosen by the president if an institution's board doesn't grant exemptions from these requirements.

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...In another blow to faculty control of their own governance bodies, SB 37 establishes term limits for faculty senate and council members—and allows presidential appointees to serve longer than the elected members. The presidential appointees would get to serve six consecutive years before having to take two off, while the elected members could only serve two years before the mandatory two-year break. A faculty senate or council member could also have their seat stripped at any time; the bill says the provost can recommend to the president that members be “immediately removed” for failing to attend meetings or conduct their “responsibilities within the council’s or senate’s parameters” or for “similar misconduct.” ...

Full story at <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/shared-governance/2025/06/09/texas-presidents-may-soon-control-faculty-senates>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:20 AM](#) No comments:    

Labels: [academic freedom](#), [politics](#), [Texas A and M](#), [U of North Texas](#), [U of Texas](#)

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Win Some/Lose Some - Lose Some/Win Some

From [The Guardian](#): The Trump administration scored its most significant legal victory in its sweeping effort to reshape American higher education when a federal judge on Monday dismissed a lawsuit brought by faculty groups over the government’s cuts to Columbia University’s federal funding.



The lawsuit concerned the Trump administration’s cuts to \$400m worth of federal funding to Columbia on the grounds it tolerated antisemitism during pro-Palestinian protests on campus. Columbia largely accepted the government’s terms for restoring funding – in an agreement widely panned as a capitulation of its own academic freedom – several days before the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) sued the Trump administration over the cuts.

The judge in the case, Mary Kay Vyskocil of the southern district of New York, ruled that the faculty unions had no “standing” to bring the suit and had not clearly indicated how the administration had broken the law...

Full story at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/16/trump-administration-columbia-lawsuit-dismissed>.

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From [SFGATE](#): A federal judge ruled Monday it was illegal for the Trump administration to cancel several hundred research grants, adding that the cuts raise serious questions about racial discrimination. U.S. District Judge William Young in Massachusetts said the administration’s process was “arbitrary and capricious” and that it did not follow long-held government rules and standards when it abruptly canceled grants deemed to focus on gender identity or diversity, equity and inclusion.

In a hearing Monday on two cases calling for the grants to be restored, the judge pushed government lawyers to offer a formal definition of DEI, questioning how grants could be canceled for that reason when some were designed to study health disparities as Congress had directed...

Young’s decision addresses only a fraction of the hundreds of NIH research projects the Trump administration has cut — those specifically addressed in two lawsuits filed separately this spring by 16 attorneys general, public health advocacy groups and some affected scientists. A full count wasn’t immediately available. While Young said the funding must be restored, Monday’s action was an interim step as the ruling could be appealed...

Full story at <https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/judge-rules-some-nih-grant-cuts-illegal-saying-20380192.php>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [7:21 AM](#) No comments:    

Labels: [Columbia](#), [diversity](#), [health care](#), [politics](#)

Will Harvard Continue to Lead the Charge? - Part 19

From the [NY Times](#): As President Trump and his team dialed up the pressure on Harvard University last month, threatening to bar its international students, the school issued what was at once a warning and a plea. “Without its international students, Harvard is not Harvard,” school officials wrote in a lawsuit asking a judge to stop the federal government’s actions. It left unsaid what Harvard, if it were no longer Harvard, would become. It’s a scenario that some inside Harvard are beginning to imagine and plan for as the Trump administration lobs attacks from all angles, seeking to cut the university off from both students and billions of dollars in federal funding...

The school’s board of trustees, the Harvard Corporation, has discussed whether hundreds, if not thousands, of people will need to be laid off. And on 8:30 a.m. Zoom calls once or twice a week, administrative officials meet with senior leaders of Harvard’s undergraduate and graduate schools to share updates about the latest Trump developments, which keep coming rapid-fire. Individual schools at Harvard are also making their own contingency plans. The Harvard

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Business School is considering moving some classes online if foreign students are barred. Facing a loss of federal funding, the T.H. Chan School of Public Health is pursuing corporate sponsors, who officials hope would sponsor Ph.D. students and post-doctorate fellows for \$100,000 a year...

"We would lose influence all over the world," said Lawrence H. Summers, who was president of Harvard from 2001 to 2006. "Instead of being the world's pre-eminent university, after a few years, Harvard would be just another school."

... The Trump administration and Republicans in Congress are also weighing changes to how much Harvard would have to pay in taxes, including a major increase in the tax on Harvard's endowment. Mr. Trump has also floated the idea of taking away Harvard's tax-exempt status entirely, although that proposal faces major hurdles. (The president cannot make the decision to revoke the tax exemption himself.) Even if only some of the scenarios came to pass, experts say, Harvard could be left in a weakened position with few modern comparisons. It would still be a big, Ivy League institution with a student body larger than, say, Dartmouth, which has 7,000 students, compared with Harvard's 24,500 today.

But without federal dollars or international talent, experts say, Harvard could fall out of the top tier for research, where it currently sits with competitors like Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. By sheer dollars spent, its research budget could shrink to something similar to that of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, which spent just over \$800 million on research in 2023, roughly half of what Harvard spends now...

Full story at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/11/us/harvard-funding-trump-administration.html>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:



Labels: Dartmouth, Harvard, MIT, politics, Stanford, U of Illinois

Straws in the Wind - Part 12

From [Inside Higher Ed](#): Williams College has told its faculty that it won't accept National Science Foundation or National Institutes of Health grants until the agencies clarify what they mean by their ban on colleges promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in violation of federal antidiscrimination laws, Science reported.

The college notified faculty in a May 30 email, saying the federal prohibition undermines academic freedom and that refusing grants could reduce the risk of lawsuits, Science reported. The journal wrote that Williams—whose faculty receive few grants—appears to be the first institution to have gone this far. An anonymous faculty member told the journal that some faculty "believe the institution is taking a moral stand and living up to its values. But others say it is signaling it doesn't care about research." ...



Full story at <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2025/06/09/williams-college-rejects-nsf-nih-funds-over-unclear-dei-ban>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:20 AM No comments:



Labels: politics, Williams College

Monday, June 16, 2025

The Money - Part 3



It's not over 'til it's over. From [The Athletic/NY Times](#): Eight female athletes filed an appeal of the House v. NCAA settlement Wednesday in a California federal court, arguing that the landmark agreement violates Title IX. The appeal only addresses the back damages portion of the settlement, not the portion that establishes the system of direct revenue sharing with athletes. The watershed settlement, approved late

Friday night by federal judge Claudia Wilken, has been years in the making. Last October Wilken granted the settlement preliminary approval, then waded through hundreds of objections filed over the ensuing eight months. Many of those objections were related to Title IX, the federal law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in education and requires schools to offer equitable opportunities to women, including in sports.

Wilken was unmoved by those objections, repeatedly saying the antitrust case had nothing to do with Title IX. But she did leave the door open for future lawsuits based on Title IX targeting how future payments from schools to athletes will be made. The appeal will not impact revenue sharing — slated to start July 1 for all schools that have opted in — but will pause the back-pay damages portion of the settlement...

Full story at <https://www.nytimes.com/athletic/6419483/2025/06/11/house-ncaa-settlement-appeal-title-ix/>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at [3:30 AM](#) No comments:



Labels: [athletics](#)

Straws in the Wind - Part 11

From [Chemical & Engineering News](#): On a warm sunny April afternoon, the mood at Columbia University's campus in Manhattan's Morningside Heights neighborhood seemed high-spirited. Students enjoyed a college fair, jumping on trampolines set up on the lush center lawns. A student band performed amid a crowd eating cotton candy and basking in the spring sunshine. But the scene's breezy mood was an illusion, both for many of the students participating in the festivities and for the chemistry researchers sequestered in the laboratories of nearby campus buildings. Inside those labs, tension and confusion were palpable for scientists as they recounted the days following massive cuts in US federal funding to the university.



...Unlike Harvard University, which is now fighting back in the courts, Columbia is engaging in negotiations with the task force, which has demanded several changes from the university before it would restore the funds. Negotiations are ongoing, and researchers say they have little clarity about their status. Some researchers say they have had grants cut. Others are on edge, fearing that funding could be canceled. All say the environment they are working in is filled with trepidation and anguish.

On March 7, Neel Shah, assistant professor in Columbia's Department of Chemistry, attended the Stand Up for Science rally in Washington Square Park, roughly 120 blocks from his home turf, alongside some 1,500 other scientists. They were protesting federal research funding cuts from multiple agencies, layoffs at those agencies, and proposed budget cuts, all of which occurred less than 2 months into Trump's presidency. While Shah was there, his phone pinged with the news that Columbia had lost \$400 million in federal funding. Shah's eyes immediately searched for his colleagues in the crowd. "The likelihood that anyone in that crowd just lost a grant was so high. There was just fear and terror, thinking, What must have been cut?" he says...

About 40 blocks north of Columbia's main campus is the university's Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center, located in the Washington Heights neighborhood. It's the research home of Barry Honig, a professor of biochemistry and molecular biophysics who has spent over 4 decades as a researcher at Columbia studying protein interactions. Honig was one of the collaborators on a project valued at over \$1 million that lost its NIH grant. The group was investigating how proteins implicated in cancers interact with each other and the most effective ways to target them with drugs. "One day, the grant just didn't exist anymore—it is nothing like we have seen before," he says. Columbia is currently in the process of negotiating the terms to restore the funding, he adds...

Joachim Frank still has vivid memories of Oct. 4, 2017, when he received a call from Stockholm at 5:18 am informing him that he and two others had won that year's Nobel Prize in Chemistry for their work in developing cryo-electron microscopy. The technique ushered in a new era of observing biomolecules... The recent stream of funding cuts hasn't affected his lab so far, but they have left him feeling grim about the state of scientific research in the US. "I'm an immigrant from Germany, and this is not what I bargained for. This is not the country that I chose. So I'm bereft," he says...

Minutes from Columbia's historic Hamilton Hall, which was occupied last year by pro-Palestinian protestors, is the Mudd Building, home of the university's chemical engineering department. Around 24 faculty members and over 100 researchers, including PhD students and postdoctoral scholars, investigate and innovate designs and technologies often used in chemical manufacturing. Among them is Sanat Kumar, a professor who studies nanoparticle chemistry. Kumar moved to the US from India in 1981 to pursue a PhD at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He held a postdoctoral position at IBM before joining Columbia in 2006...

Kumar warns that the implications of the budget cuts and the government's new hostility toward international students could be far-reaching and irreversible. "People will stop coming, and our country will be at a competitive disadvantage," he says. "It is a matter of time before other countries overtake."

Full story at <https://cen.acs.org/policy/research-funding/Columbia-University-chemical-scientists-dismayed/103/web/2025/06>.

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